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FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000068

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR - DICARLO, EUR/SCE

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TAGS: PGOV PREL SR HR

SUBJECT: CROATIAN POLITICIANS PUT POSITIVE SPIN ON SERBIAN
ELECTION RESULTS

REF: BELGRADE 84

Classified By: Political Officer Tom Selinger for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Croatia's political leaders have unanimously portrayed results in Serbia's January 21 elections (reftel) as positive for the region. Reacting quickly to allay any domestic concerns over the Serb Radical Party's plurality, PM Ivo Sanader stressed that the results offered the chance for formation of a pro-European government in Belgrade. "We know that Serbia and the international community are facing tough decisions on the final status of Kosovo and in that regard a stable, pro-European and democratic government would certainly be in the interests of Serbia, as well as the international community," Sanader said.

¶2. (C) MFA State Secretary Hidajet Biscevic underscored the PM's statement in a 23 January conversation with the Ambassador, calling Sunday's results a success for democratic and pro-European forces. According to Biscevic, PM Sanader's message to Serbia is that there is no time to lose. The parties of President Tadic and PM Kostunica should move to form a coalition and not allow the final status of Kosovo to become an excuse for dragging out the process of forming a government.

¶3. (U) President Stjepan Mesic welcomed the fact that the Radicals would not be able to form a government on their own, citing Radical electoral rhetoric making claims on Croatian territory. Mesic said he expected Serbia's democratic parties to settle various differences, including cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, and form a ruling coalition. Speaker of Parliament Vladimir Seks echoed these expectations, saying he was confident the Radical Party would not enter government in Serbia.

¶4. (U) Opposition politicians also weighed in, with Social Democratic Party (SDP) president Ivica Racan and Croatian Peoples' Party (HNS) president Vesna Pusic both calling the results a step forward for Serbia. While the persistence of nationalist politics was disappointing, Racan said, pro-European and democratic forces in Serbia had grown stronger.

BRADTKE